

Canadian Heritage Minutes

The Canadian Heritage Minutes are a series of minute-long videos (similar to Public Service Announcements and other ads) that have been produced since 1991. They are aired on television and in cinemas (as part of the previews lineup) as well as online, and are also used in classrooms in Canada. They were created to raise awareness about Canadian history among Canadians, especially about neglected or less well-known moments and individuals in Canadian history, particularly those excluded by mainstream historical records.

According to the *Canadian Encyclopedia*, early on the criteria for a Canadian Heritage Minute was that it should:

1. Intrigue us with Canada's heritage
2. Be producible within resources
3. Be truthful within the bounds of dramatic license
4. Reflect and celebrate Canadian social and cultural values: tolerance, fairness, courage, tenacity, resourcefulness, inventiveness
5. Reveal origins
6. Surprise, provoke reflection, re-examination, raise questions.

Several of these points could be questioned, as our discussion will likely show.

Today, we're going to watch a few of these videos, discuss the vocabulary used in them, discuss their impact, and then apply the model to Korean history and explore what a series of Korean Heritage Minutes might look like.

CHM 1: Naskumituwin (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mVVD9yYCKil>)

Narrator 1: "Treaty" in Cree is "Naskumitiwun," an oral agreement.

George Spence: *Thank you, spirit of the fish. Thank you, Great Spirit, for this Good Life.*

Narrator 1: And our agreements were always spoken. For George Spence, the core of treaty was "wiichihiiwaawin," to help one another.

Commissioner: *"And so we, the commissioners..."*

Narrator 1: He was there for the making of Treaty Nine, where the Cree were told—

Commissioner: *"We will honour this agreement together, for as long as the sun shines and the waters flow."*

Narrator 1: The Cree made their mark because they were assured that the land would be shared, and they would always be able to harvest what they needed. George Spence was my great-grandfather. In his life he saw many promises of the Treaty go unfulfilled.

Narrator 2: Treaties were essential to the creation of Canada. First Nations still fight for the agreements to be honoured.

CHM 2: The Discovery of Insulin (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=amCeBhkNo50>)

Nurse 1: "Leonard Thompson: 13 years old, diabetes mellitus. 65 pounds."

Nurse 2: Starve the child to let them live? The treatment's as cruel as the disease.

Nurse 1: It's a death sentence.

MacLeod: Dr. Banting this could be it!

Administrator: "He's the first to receive this trial."

Father: "But will it save him?"

MacLeod: "It's not pure enough."

Banting: So we try again... and again... and again.

Narrator: *Before the discovery of insulin, diabetes was a **death sentence**. Banting, Best, Collip, and MacLeod's **breakthrough** has saved millions of lives. Leonard Thompson's was the first.*

CHM 3: Kensington Market (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8E2z9YouMfM>)

It started as the Jewish market: **Victorian houses** became storefronts: **kosher butchers**, tailors and bakeries. Soon enough other immigrants came to our community. Each arrival added a piece to the **patchwork of our bustling bazaar**. We all understood that with hard work, **anything was possible**. Over time faces and languages changed but **the spirit of our village** inside the city remained. See, it didn't matter where you were from: the market became home.

Narrator: Neighborhoods like Toronto's Kensington Market **have helped shape Canada** by bringing newcomers **shoulder-to-shoulder** to **build new lives** together.

CHM 4: Viola Desmond (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ie0xWYRSX7Y>)

Viola Desmond: All I wanted was to see a movie.

Viola Desmond: "One down please."

Ticket Booth Worker: "I can't sell downstairs tickets to you people."

Viola Desmond: How dare they. I could afford to buy the more expensive ticket. I run my own business. But they refused to take my money. They left me there all night.

Reporter: "On what charge?"

Viola Desmond: "They said I didn't pay the theatre tax. But it was really about colour."

Minister: "Sister Desmond, appeal this conviction and your community will stand behind you."

Community Member: "Do you have any idea what this will do to us?"

Reporter: "So what are you going to do?"

Viola Desmond: "Make it right."

Narrator: Viola Desmond's case inspired Nova Scotia's **civil rights movement**. She was **pardoned** 63 years later based on the injustice of her conviction.

Questions for Discussion

1. What do you see in common between the **Canadian Heritage Moments** we watched? How are they different from one another?
2. Do you think they all fulfill the criteria mentioned on page 1 of this handout?
3. Were there any moments that surprised you, or seemed unusual?

Reflection

1. Why would a "philanthropic organization" invest money in making them, and why would they become an important part of how Canadians learn about neglected parts of their history?
2. If you were making a list of criteria for Heritage Moments for your country, what virtues would it include?

Task

Working in your group, choose several historical figures, moments, or places from your nation's history. Avoid choosing the most obvious or famous figures and focus on neglected individuals, places, or events. (Especially try to include women, members of minorities, and also moments of injustice or wrongdoing.)